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S E R M O N

Preached in the CHAPEL at

DEAL *in* KENT,

On the 11th of FEBRUARY, 1757.

B E I N G

The Day appointed by Proclamation for a general Fast and Humiliation before Almighty God, to be observed in a most devout and solemn Manner, by sending up our Prayers and Supplications to the Divine Majesty :

F O R

Obtaining Pardon of our Sins, and for averting those heavy Judgments which our manifold Provocations have most justly deserved ; and imploring his Blessing and Assistance on the Arms of his Majesty by Sea and Land, and for restoring and perpetuating Peace, Safety, and Prosperity to himself, and to his Kingdoms.

By *NICOLAS CARTER*, D.D.
CURATE of the said CHAPEL.

L O N D O N :

Printed for R. GRIFFITHS, in *Pater-noster-Row*.

S E R M O N



DEAL W KENT

On the 17th of FEBRUARY, 1757.

PRING

The Day appointed for the reading of a general Fast and Thanksgiving
was before Almighty God, to be observed in a most devout and
solemn manner, by fasting up our Prayers and supplications to
the Divine Majesty:

During the time of our fast, and the reading of the Lord's Prayer which
our most holy Providence have most justly deserved; and imploring his bless-
ed and assistance on the Arms of his Majesty by sea and land, and for the
the good governing Peace, Justice, and Prosperity of his Kingdom, and to his

By NICHOLAS CARTER, D.D.
Curate of the said Church.

L O N D O N :

Printed for R. GARRICK, in Pall-mall.

NEHEMIAH ix. 28.

But after they had Rest, they did Evil again before thee ; therefore ledest thou them in the Hand of their Enemies, so that they had the Dominion over them : Yet when they returned and cried unto thee, thou heardest them from Heaven, and many Times didst thou deliver them, according to thy Mercies.

THERE are two ways in which God has threatened to apply punishments, in order to reclaim sinners, and bring them to repentance, and to a better life.

The first, and most important, regards single persons, and is to be exactly proportioned to the nature of their case, and the faultiness of their conduct. It takes place, in some degree, occasionally in this life ; but is to be certainly and fully adjusted in the next. And this personal punishment, whether present, or future, or both, is not to be escaped by other means, than a personal reformation ; by each man's renouncing, in his own behaviour, whatever is forbidden by God's laws, and by embracing and pursuing a new life of virtue, and full obedience. The unalterable maxims of the divine government, in this respect, are these,—*God will render to every man according to his deeds*, Rom, ii. 6. *Every one of us shall give account of himself to God*, ch. xiv. 12. *The soul that sinneth, it shall die*, Exek.

xviii. 4. This is that *terror of the Lord*, which is intended to *persuade men*, 2 Cor. v. 11. both because it is not to be evaded by any power, or art, or accident; and because, in its consequences, it will be as lasting, as it will be miserable.

The other way, in which God directs his threatnings, is, to bodies of men, united under particular systems of government, and distinguished by the names of empires, kingdoms, states, and republics. And these bodies politic are capable of experiencing God's displeasure only in the present time; because it is in the present time only, that they subsist, as such. Hereafter persons will be considered and treated, not nationally, but singly. None will be judged worthy of punishment, because they were of this or that empire, kingdom, or nation; but merely on account of their own personal offences. On the contrary, in the present state of things, the righteous are involved in the common sufferings of the wicked; and the wicked partake of the common blessings of the righteous. When God is pleased to exalt a nation by his especial protection and favour, he does not usually debar men, even notoriously impious and profligate, from a share of the benefits from thence arising; nor, when he thinks fit to send national punishments, does he usually exempt even the best of his servants from having a part in them. But sinners have no cause to triumph, nor good men to be dejected, at this manner of the divine government. For as there is to be a future state of existence, in which each person will be considered, and treated separately; the righteous cannot fail of receiving there each one singly, a proportionate reward; nor will the wicked be able to escape there, each in his own person, a condign punishment. It is observable that *Solomon*, though he seems to complain, that, in the present distributions of providence, there is *one event to the righteous, and to the wicked*, Ecclef. ix. 2. Yet said in his heart, i.e. was fully convinced, that *God will judge the righteous and the wicked; for there is*, says he, *a time there*, i.e. in a future life, *for every purpose, and for every work*. Ch. iii. 17.

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There are three more eminent kinds of punishments by which God chastises nations, when their aggravated wickedness has provoked his resentment. These are, sword, pestilence, and famine. Thus the message of God to *David* by the prophet *Gad* was to enquire—*Shall seven years of famine come unto thee, in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three days pestilence in thy land?* 2 Sam. xxiv. 13.

Of these, the sword appears to be the most dreadful, as the others are more immediately the work of God, and this is executed by the cruel hands of men. This was the reason of *David's* choice, in his reply to the prophet—*Let us fall now into the hand of the Lord, (for his mercies are great) and let me not fall into the hand of man.* v. 14.

God is abundantly kind and compassionate. *He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men,* Lam. iii. 33. *In wrath he remembers mercy,* Hab. iii. 2. He turns a favourable eye to the humble prostrations of such as have incensed him, even by the most outrageous provocations. But man, tyrannical and brutal man, sets no bounds to his ambition and fury. War is the favourite instrument of advancing his honour, and gratifying his rage; and war carries with it the sum total of horrors, pains, distresses, miseries, and woes.

All war, though immediately caused by men, ought to be understood, as a judgment, appointed, or permitted, by God, for the punishment of wickedness, *I make peace, and create evil; I the Lord do all these things,* Isa. xlv. 7. For even the best nations are faulty, by not preventing, or reforming public vices and impieties, so far as they might, and ought to do. And therefore these, though their provocations are indeed less than the provocations of others, ought however to believe, that God suffers them to fall under the calamities of war, for their chastisement, and to awaken them by it to a better conduct.

In a war it may sometimes happen, that one side deserves the whole blame of occasioning it, and the other, in that respect,
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is innocent. But even in this case, though the innocent should prove victorious, yet, as war is attended with very great and inevitable evils, it is still to be reckoned a divine judgment. If then, in the midst of triumph, nations have reason to fear, that their conduct is not so just and pious, as it ought to be; what must others think of themselves, whom God permits to fly before their enemies, in every day of battle, and *to be a scorn and derision to those who are round about them?* Ps. xlv. 13. Such reflexions might be of use, if it were remembered at the same time, that the sins of a nation are the sins of single persons in it, and are no otherwise to be reformed, than by each person's strictly examining his own conscience, and effectually resolving fully to amend whatever he finds amiss in himself.

In disposing of the events of war, it is not a constant method of providence to favour those whose cause, in the quarrel, is the most righteous. There is a remarkable proof of this, recorded in the 20th chapter of *Judges*: And, in many instances, when God suffered the *Israhelites* to fall by the sword of their enemies, it was not because they had not right and justice on their side, but because their sins deserved chastisement.

Hence a people engaged in war, are not allowed to depend upon God's assistance, merely because the occasion of it is justly to be imputed to the falshood, iniquity, and ambition of their adversaries. For, though these are indeed heinous crimes in them, which God will by some means or other, in a proper time assuredly punish, yet his way of doing it is, not by causing them always to be vanquished by those whom they have injured, if they, though innocent with regard to the present contest, are, on other accounts, an unprofitable and sinful people that need correction. For war being one of the great plagues, applied by God for national chastisement, he directs the issues of it to serve that purpose chiefly, and not to shew on which side is the better cause.

Nor is the established religion, however preferable in its constitution, a sufficient ground of assurance to a nation, that God will defend and prosper it against enemies, whose doctrines and man-

manner of worship are far less pure and acceptable. For success in war is not always intended by providence, as a mark, to shew whether of the contending parties professes the purest religion, or whether of them is the better people; but the evils and calamities of it ought to be esteemed, unless perhaps in some very extraordinary cases, a scourge and a judgment upon all.

It well deserves to be remarked, that God was pleased to favour the arms of *Mahommed*, and his successors, to such an amazing extent, that they despoiled Christians of many large kingdoms, and established their own worship through a great part of the earth, upon so strong a bottom, that it has continued immoveable, for more than a thousand years. But we ought by no means to infer from thence, that *Mahomedanism* is a religion more agreeable to God, than Christianity. The success of *Mahommed* is more probably to be ascribed to another cause. The Christian church, throughout the east, and in many parts of the west, was shamefully torn in pieces, by heresies, schisms, animosities, and persecutions, accompanied with gross licentiousness, and corruption of manners. *Mahommed* was a scourge, in the hand of God, to chastize, and even to exterminate wicked Christians. And the extent, increase, and power of *Mahomedanism*, even to this day, seem to be permitted by God, as a standing judgment upon the Christian world, for the heresies, superstitions, cruelties, perfidiousness, debaucheries, unrighteous, and impious practices, which every where openly abound in it.

After these general remarks, let us turn our thoughts to points which more nearly regard ourselves. We are afflicted by a dangerous and expensive war. It is not the province of a preacher to enquire whether we or our enemies have the juster cause: And it may be truly said of most others who are forward in speaking their opinion, that they are not sufficiently acquainted with numerous facts and circumstances, necessary to be well known, before a proper judgment, in the case, can be formed. This matter therefore we must refer to our governors, of whom we should always be willing to think, that they would not cause the devouring sword

sword to be let loose, without inevitable as well as justifiable occasions. But our direct business is to consider, that war, whether just or otherwise, is a token of God's displeasure, on account of our sins ; and that the immediate concern of every one of us, is to look well into our own behaviour, and resolve to reform whatever we perceive to be wrong in that. Let our cause be as right as can be wished, yet this is a truth of which there is too glaring proof, that we are an unprofitable and sinful people ; and therefore we need look no farther to discover the reason of our present distresses. But to be more particular:

The more immediate instruments by which our war is carried on, are the army, and the navy. What small success we have hitherto had from either of these is too well known ; and when it is considered how deeply they are both corrupted in their manners, I fear no better ought to be expected from them. Wisdom, and true courage, are not the offspring of wickedness ; and without wisdom, and true courage, arms are employed in vain: How can leaders, whose thoughts are habitually turned to drinking, gaming, debauchery, and idle diversions, be expected to understand their employments ? How can they be able either to penetrate into the designs of their enemies, or to form proper schemes to counter-act them ? How can they plan operations of deep design, and grand importance, when their minds are perpetually bent upon such mean objects, and bent too in a manner, which prevents all serious attention to the business of their profession ? As to courage, what has a bad man to inspire, or support that ? The present life is his all ; and therefore he has the strongest motive to retreat from every danger of losing it. But a good man has a principle, which warms him with resolution, and animates him in the most hazardous trials. Conscious of his virtue, and of the rewards which are to follow it, he fears not to die ; and consequently he will neither stand at a distance, nor retire in the hour of battle.

Again ; greater profaneness, and contempt of all religion, and decency, cannot well be imagined, than what are every where seen
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in the common seamen, and soldiers. What serious person can forbear thinking, that God must be highly displeased with such abundant and open wickedness ; and that a nation, which allows it, can have little grounds to expect his protection ? A considerable stop might certainly be put to these bare-faced and enormous impieties, if superiors, each in his respective province, would honestly and diligently exercise the authority which the laws have given him for that purpose. But so far is this from being the case, that the common men are encouraged in their vicious and impious manners, not only by the remissness, but even by the example of their superiors.

And, indeed, with what face can an officer, either of the army or navy, correct his men for swearing, when he himself is as notoriously, and perhaps with greater excess, guilty of the same vice ? Or how can he expect that they should constantly go to places of public worship, and not slip out from thence, one by one, as many of them do, but should stay the whole service, and behave with decency and attention, if he himself hardly ever comes there to influence them by his own practise ?

But it would be a gross mistake to fancy that military men only are culpable. Sad corruptions, and impiety are chargeable upon persons of all ranks, professions, and sexes. Magistrates have much to answer for, by wilfully neglecting very material parts of their office, and by frequently perverting their power, to promote their own unrighteous views. Such torrents of profane oaths and curses would not overwhelm us, in every street, poured forth by women and children, as well as men, if magistrates, who know these things, would punish offenders, as the law expressly directs them : And the crying sin of selling less than weight, to the grievous oppression of the poor, could seldom be practised, if a proper method were taken to discover the infamous defrauders, that they might be fined according to law. Magistrates should remember, that they will hereafter be called to judgment, not only for their own personal sins, but also for the sins of others,

if they do not conscientiously endeavour to prevent them, as far as their authority extends. But,

Such is our partiality, or blindness, that when we hear others, especially bodies of men, charged with corruption and impiety, we eagerly join in condemning them, and forget what is due to ourselves: Whereas, when their misconduct is mentioned, and we disapprove and lament it, we should from thence take an occasion of looking well at home, to see whether the displeasure we entertain against their faults, might not full as properly be applied to our own. Military-men and magistrates, however blameable, have too just ground to retort upon their accusers—*He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone.* Neglect of religion, abominable swearing, worldly-mindedness, deceitful dealings, pride, ambition, profuseness, debauchery, excessive gaming, spite, calumny, uncleanness, revellings, drunkenness, and a dislike of whatever is decent, pious, and praise-worthy, are too general to allow men of any denomination to rebuke others, without exposing themselves to be repaid in kind.

For once at least, and especially upon this solemn day, let us recall our thoughts from the too common and pleasing amusement of prying into, and condemning the vices of others, and force them, however reluctant, to the better, though ungrateful task of examining ourselves. The proper consequence of such examination will be, a solicitude to amend each one our own mistakes, and offences; and when this is done, the wickedness of the times, of which we so justly complain, will totally be at an end.

And a resolution to do this should be attended with a resolution to call every part of our conduct to view, and to try it thoroughly, by the dictates of reason, and the clear precepts and declarations of holy scripture. These are the rules by which all our actions are to be examined; and whatever conscience witnesses to be a deviation from them, must be reformed. No excuses, no palliations, no partiality, must be admitted. What is confessed to be fit and right, must fairly and fully be done. For *to him that knoweth*

to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin. Jam. iv. 17. And we cannot be accepted disciples of *Jesus Christ*, unless we obey the will and commands of God, in that plain sense, in which *Jesus Christ* has revealed them. *Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?* Luke vi. 46.

Let us then consider, each one of us here present—Are we guilty of any kind of dishonesty, in our dealings? Do we, in matters of commerce, make unjust representations, affect unfair concealments, or aim at exorbitant gains? Or do we, in other matters, over-reach, defraud, or oppress, with a view to unrighteous self-interest? All such practices are as contrary to the law of nature, as they are to the express designs and commands of the gospel. *Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them*—Matt. vii. 12, is an unchangeable law of equity, and enforced by the authority of *Christ*. And by the terms of the Christian covenant, the unrighteous, extortioners, and all workers of iniquity *shall not inherit the kingdom of God*.

Are we guilty of uncleanness? Will not conscience tell us, that we should be extremely displeased, and unhappy, if that was done to our relations, which we do to the relations of others? Are we then not condemned by our own evidence? And what say the scriptures? *Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled; but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.* Heb. xiii. 4. *Neither fornicators nor adulterers shall inherit the kingdom of God.* 1 Cor. vi. 9.

Uncharitableness, as it is opposed to universal benevolence, is another sin of high malignity, no less contrary to the principles of nature, than to the spirit of the gospel. Good will to all, and a readiness to please, and serve those with whom we converse, or who are within our reach, consistently with other obligations, is our duty, interest, and glory, as we are sociable beings of like imperfections, appetites, and feelings, and all under the same supreme government. And this duty, thus founded in constitution, is enforced, in a most remarkable and affecting manner, by the Christian revelation. *Could we speak with the tongues of men and*

angels; had we the gift of prophecy, and understood all mysteries, and all knowledge, and all faith; and should we bestow all our goods to feed the poor, and give our body to be burned, and have not charity, it would profit us nothing, 1 Cor. xiii. 1. &c. Can we then be so amazingly blind, as not to discern, that the breach of charity, to any considerable extent, must be extremely offensive to God? And yet how notoriously contrary is the practice of many, I fear, of most Christians, to this natural and positive duty? Does not every day afford examples of hatred, spite, calumnies, revilings, causeless vexations, affronts, injuries, oppressions, and cruelties? And, will it not appear, upon due reflection, unreasonable to expect, that God will interpose to help us in our public sufferings, while we deeply provoke him, by vexing, afflicting, and injuring one another? With what assurance can we ask of him means of national happiness, dependent upon *his* will and power, when we impiously violate the common means of mutual peace, and comfort, dependant upon our *own* will and power? Unless we can be persuaded into a more benevolent temper, greater degrees of national affluence and prosperity will, but too probably, be perverted into occasions of our running into greater degrees of variance, wranglings, and multiplied kinds of uncharitableness.

But among the various occasions of strife, and animosity, none is more blame-worthy, than that which is taken from men's different notions, in points of faith. To make religion, which binds us, by the strongest ties and motives, to cultivate benevolence, and friendship, a pretence to justify hatred, and persecution, is a shocking absurdity: And for zealots to vaunt of the orthodoxy of their faith, and from thence to fancy, that they *do God service*, by hating and persecuting others, who differ from them, demonstrates an ignorance and presumption, as well as a malevolence, which no arguments whatever, consistent with reason, and scripture, can possibly excuse. *Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of*, Luke ix. 55. *Who art thou, that judgest another man's servant?* Rom. xiv. 4.

There are many other gross offences, which might with equal
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propriety be proposed, as matter of self-examination, were there time sufficient to do it. But every one who feels a sincere disposition towards amendment, will have a ready monitor within, to shew him at least his greater transgressions, and to warn him to forsake them. And to others of reprobate minds, and hardened consciences, a more exact, and enlarged description of their vices will be of no benefit. These, to speak in the language of the prophet, *have refused to receive correction; they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return*, Jer. v. 3. And it would be in vain to tell them, that they are chargeable with no small share of that public wickedness, which provokes God to inflict public chastisement. For, if they will not be awed by an apprehension of personal and severer punishment, to be applied hereafter, it is hardly to be supposed, that they will be influenced to change their manners, by suffering calamities, common to others, as well as to themselves at present. However, their folly and contempt of advice cannot alter the nature of things, and the determination of God: And they certainly are, and ought to be esteemed no less enemies to their country, than they are to themselves; nor can any thing, but a total change in their conduct, save them *from the wrath to come*.

But there is a sin, which, as it seems to be the most general, and is, in a certain sense, an encouragement to all others, may well be supposed to be the chief occasion of God's displeasure; and that is a disrelish of religion. Multitudes spend their time in such a perpetual round of follies and vices, that it is impossible, serious thoughts of God, and of their duty to him, should ever be admitted in their mind, to any good purpose. Of others, who carry an appearance of religion, many are vile hypocrites, and more place it in useless speculation and ceremony. Few therefore remain, who come to God in *the way of his commandments, and worship him in spirit and in truth*. True piety consists in a desire to please God, and a readiness to obey him. The motives to this, are a quick sense of his constant

stant presence, and everlasting dominion, with a full persuasion that he will *reward every man according to his works*. Mat. xvi. 27. Whoever properly cherishes these principles, will always be desirous, as well as able, to resist temptations. The allurements of forbidden pleasures, uprighteous gains, or unjust dominion, can make little impression upon one who remembers, that it is the certain ground of his eternal happiness, no less than it is his duty — *To fear God, and keep his commandments*. Nor can such a person fall into the inexcusable, though common mistake of imagining, that faith, and a punctual observation of ceremonial institutions, will recommend us to the divine favour, while we wilfully transgress the more important laws of justice, charity, truth, sobriety, and holiness.

Such only as live under a constant sense of God's sovereignty and goodness, and resolve in every occurrence of life, to follow his directions, are truly religious. And these approach the throne of grace, in secret prayer, with an assurance and comfort, to which others must needs be strangers. For their conscience is to them a faithful witness, that they ask for assistance, with a sincere desire to be enabled *to perfect holiness in the fear of God*. *Whatsoever we ask*, says an apostle, *we receive of God, because we keep his commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in his sight*. 1 John iii. 22. But whoever persists in wilful sin, he is either afraid to pray at all, or most absurdly deceives himself, if he hopes that his prayers are acceptable to God. For *we know that God beareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doth his will, him he beareth*. John ix. 31.

Such ought to be the life of each person, and by such a life, in each person, is a public reformation to be accomplished. A public reformation is the only probable means of prevailing with God, *who ruleth in the kingdom of men*, to remove public calamities. When the *Israelites cried unto him* in their distress, and humbled themselves by a national and thorough repentance, *he heard them from heaven, and many times did he deliver them, according to his mercies*. And, upon no other ground are we allowed to hope

hope, that God will *be intreated for our land*, and free us from the miseries of want, as well as of war, the present manifest tokens of his wrath against us, for our multiplied sins and impieties.

We have reasons to reflect how miserable our condition will be, should God, in his righteous judgment, add following years of greater scarcity, than the last, to the increasing burdens, and afflictions of war. Our iniquities deserve this, and more; shall we not then be persuaded to forsake them?

Let us not vainly imagine, that the going through the solemnity of this day, with an exact appearance of devotion, will purchase the divine favour, if we make it not an occasion, and the beginning of a better life.

Let us remember too, that by how much clearer light we are favoured with, by so much greater will our guilt be, if we refuse to be guided by it: and so far ought we to be from expecting, that God will take part with us against our enemies, because we profess a purer religion than they do, that this circumstance should be to us a ground of distrust, and terror. Because we are *light in the Lord*, therefore are we obliged to *walk as children of light, proving what is acceptable to the Lord*. Eph. v. 8, 10. But if we presumptuously omit this, we have reason to fear that God will confound our pride, and revenge our unprofitableness, by causing those to be the instruments of our punishment, whom, though we excel in knowledge, we equal, if not exceed, in wickedness.

Nor should we, in reflecting upon our losses, and disappointment, ascribe the cause of them so much to the inabilities of ministers, as to the sins of the nation; always keeping in mind, that the sins of the nation, are the sins of individuals; and that there is no other method of reforming them, but by reforming ourselves. And it will ever be more beneficial to single persons, as well as to the community; and a surer way of pacifying God's displeasure against the whole, to correct private vices, than to censure public measures.

I will conclude, with reciting several passages of scripture;
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of which, I hope, every hearer will make a proper application to himself.

We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us: for we have sinned against the Lord our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, Jer. iii. 25. O Jerusalem! wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee? ch. iv. 14. Thy ways and thy doings have procured these things unto thee, ver. 18. Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy back slidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see, that it is an evil thing, and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts, ch. ii. 19. For them that honour me, I will honour, and they that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed. 1 Sam. ii. 3. Therefore have I made you contemptible and base before all people, according as ye have not kept my ways. Malachi ii. 9. I will judge you, O house of Israel! every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions, so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart, and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? Ezek. xviii. 30, 31.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore. Amen.

F I N I S.



